

CHILDREN'S VISION IMPROVEMENT AND LEARNING ACT

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the travesty of preventable vision loss in our nation's children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that millions of children do not receive the vision evaluations recommended by top medical organizations, placing them at greater risk for permanent vision loss, as well as physical and emotional difficulties.

Undiagnosed vision problems can lead to permanent vision loss and learning difficulties.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends a vision evaluation in the preschool years. Yet, the study finds that only 1 in 3 children received one before entering kindergarten.

It is a national disgrace that only a small number of children are actually receiving the preventative care, recommended by our own medical guideline, they need to ensure healthy vision.

One eye doctor who read the report called it, "a wake-up call to both primary care providers and eye care professionals." It is clear that we must do better.

Mr. Speaker, in many cases, vision loss can be avoided with early diagnosis and treatment. For the sake of our nation's young people, we need to make sure that children receive the necessary preventative vision care.

Amblyopia is a serious vision problem that affects nearly one-half million preschoolers and is the leading cause of vision loss in young Americans. I recently met with seven-year-old Kennedy Biederman. She is a prime example of what can happen when a child doesn't get proper visual evaluations.

Throughout her childhood, no one noticed that Kennedy couldn't see well. Despite multiple visits, her pediatrician did not notice, her teachers did not notice and neither did the nurses that screened her vision at school. Like many others, she simply slipped through the cracks.

At age 5½, Kennedy happened to visit an eye doctor because of a small injury. The doctor performed an eye exam and diagnosed amblyopia. He also found that Kennedy was legally blind in her left eye and that her "good" eye had only 20/80 vision. "I don't know how she was even functioning at school," her father said.

Mr. Speaker, we have the best medical system in the world. We must do better so that more children don't wind up in the same position as Kennedy. The best way to do that is by making sure that children receive an eye exam from an eye doctor.

An eye exam measures a number of visual skills that are critical to a child's healthy vision, such as using both eyes as a team, the ability for the eyes to focus properly when reading a book or viewing a computer, and the ability for the eyes to move properly when reading across a page of print.

As the National Amblyopia Youth Spokesperson, Kennedy, and her parents Jason and Jill Biederman, will have a great opportunity to share their story. I commend them for their ef-

forts to raise public awareness and believe that with their help, we can make a difference in the lives of children nationwide.

The CDC states that approximately 1.8 million children under the age of 18 (2.5%) are blind or have some form of visual impairment. Many cases of visual impairment could be eliminated simply through more timely diagnosis and treatment.

In order to address this egregious situation, in the last Congress I introduced legislation to provide states with resources they need to increase the number of children that receive an eye exam. More than 100 of my colleagues cosponsored the legislation, as did more than 60 organizations nationwide.

Yesterday, I proudly reintroduced, the Children's Vision Improvement and Learning Act, H.R. 2238.

This bill would work to address these issues by offering grants to all states to provide eye exams and necessary follow-up care; developing and distributing educational materials on state children's vision programs; and ensuring that these new initiatives complement, not supplant, services provided under Medicaid and SCHIP.

As Congress works to improve the educational opportunities available to children in this country, the need to remove outside impediments to learning must be addressed to achieve long-term success.

DELIVERING MAIL—COLLECTING HOPE

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to gratefully acknowledge and thank the National Association of Letter Carriers, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), the AFL-CIO, America's Second Harvest, and the United Way of America for their extraordinary efforts in organizing and carrying out the largest single food drive in the world: the annual National Association of Letter Carriers National Food Drive.

The food drive will again take place on the second Saturday in May, which this year falls on May 14th. The timing of the drive is no coincidence; it comes at a time when most food banks are low on supplies, having exhausted their collections from the holiday season. Last year the food drive collected an incredible 71 million pounds of food for donation to food banks, pantries, and shelters across the country.

As you can imagine, it takes an army of volunteers to collect that amount of food. This year USPS, with help from the Campbell Soup Company and Valpak Direct Marketing Systems, is distributing more than 150 million mailings promoting the drive and encouraging donations. On May 14th, donations will be collected by letter carriers along their mail routes in all 50 states.

This year's food drive has an added urgency and importance. The food drive largely supplements the inadequate support the Federal government has provided to our nation's citizens facing financial difficulty. Families around the nation are struggling to get by—family wage jobs are scarce, energy prices are at record highs, and government support

mechanisms are increasingly being axed by this Administration and this Congress.

When we think about letter carriers, first class comes to mind. From now on, we should think of letter carriers and everyone involved in this as world class, because that's what they are. Please join me in donating food on May 14th and acknowledging the spirit of America that will be carried from door to door. May this year's food drive be the safest and most abundant collection yet.

185TH BIRTHDAY OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate what would have been the 185th birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. This week also marks the 3rd annual National Nurses Week, which will be observed May 6th through May 12th.

The 2.7 million registered nurses in the United States bear the primary responsibility for the care and well-being of hospital patients and are the largest single component of the health care profession. Unfortunately, our nation faces a serious shortfall in the number of nurses available; too few nurses are caring for too many patients. According to a report by the Department of Health and Human Services, our nation could face a shortage of 800,000 nurses by the year 2020. As our population ages and as health care costs continue to escalate, government, hospitals, and policy advocates must work together to combat this problem.

The theme of National Nurses Week 2005 is Nurses: Many Roles, One Profession. In addition to their tireless hands-on efforts caring for patients, nurses are constantly involved in health education, research, business, and public policy. Having met with numerous nurses from the 29th district of California, I know first hand the needs of nurses of America. That is why I support House Resolution 245, which will recognize the important contributions of nurses to the health care system and the goals and ideals of National Nurses Week. I ask my colleagues to please join me in honoring some of America's greatest heroes, our nurses.

TRIBUTE TO THE CONGRESSIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Congressional Youth Leadership Council (CYLC) on the occasion of their 20th Anniversary. Founded in 1985, the Council has long been committed to inspiring America's youth to achieve their full leadership potential.

CYLC has educated over 200,000 individually selected young men and women representing all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the American territories, and over 100